

2018 Furbearer Advisory Committee Summary Minutes

May 23 – May 24, 2018
Kemp Station, Minocqua, WI

DNR Committee Members in Attendance: Shawn Rossler, Chair, Wildlife Management (WM), Nathan Roberts, Office of Applied Science (OAS), Dan Goltz, WM, SOD, Todd Naas, WM, NOD, Jenna Kosnicki, WM, NOD, Brandon Stefanski, WM, WCD, Nate Kroeplin, Law Enforcement (LE)

Invited Ojibwe Biological Advisor Committee Member in Attendance: Jonathan Gilbert, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC)

Invited Committee Members in Attendance: David Ruid, USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (WS), Dan Eklund, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Jim Hanson, Wisconsin Bear Hunter's Association (WBHA), Scott Zimmerman, Wisconsin Trapper's Association (WTA), Ed Harvey, Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC), Pat Quaintance, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF), Ralph Fritsch, WWF, Al Lobner, Hunter's Rights Coalition (HRC)

Advisory Committee Assistant: Curtis Twellmann, WM

Invited Department Staff: Brian Dhuey, OAS, Nick Forman, OAS, Dave MacFarland, OAS, Lindsey Long, WM

Invited Guest: Laurie Groskopf, Public

May 23, 2018: Day 1 – Reports and Updates

12:05 PM Meeting initiated by Shawn Rossler with Kemp Station logistics, introductions and agenda repairs.

Meeting Protocol – Decisions made by this committee are recommendations. We will strive to come together with collective consent on all issues. In case of a lasting disagreement, documentation will be noted in the meeting minutes. The data and discussions shared at this meeting will be relayed to the tribes by the GLIFWC representative.

Furbearer Management Update led by Shawn Rossler - A Marten Protection Area (MPA) scope statement has been approved by the Governor. Details of the scope statement included an addition of a third MPA to encompass the Apostle Islands (less Madeline and Long) and to allow expanded trap use within the MPA boundaries. The proposed expanded trapping opportunity would include the use of weasel boxes with the 1 3/8" opening restriction (among other restrictions consistent with the "4-day check" boxes currently allowed outside of the MPA boundaries) and footholds with some type of pan tension device and/or other modifications to reduce the possibility of capturing incidental marten. The language is not yet finalized.

From the MN DNR Furbearer Department, John Erb shared that the average size of Marten in MN is about 2.5 pounds and they have seen 1 incidental capture of marten (successfully released) in all the years they have been capturing and collaring gray wolves in MN. The wolf BMP data which occurred in marten range resulted in zero marten captures (and zero incidental captures of similarly sized animals to marten). The wolf BMP trappers used an 8-pound pan tension over the course of their study. Wisconsin Wildlife Services has also recorded zero incidental marten captures using a pan tension between 4 and 8 pounds. This data suggests that with modifications, footholds can be used to trap larger animals while preventing marten captures.

The marten committee has weighed in on this previously but the message may not have been spread adequately through the marten committee as the GLIFWC representative had not yet heard that the plan was to increase capture devices to allow footholds in the MPAs. Regulations that are difficult to enforce may result in less compliance, that could put marten at risk. The controversy with breakaway devices on cable-restraints is a comparable situation. While no opposition to allowing weasel boxes was voiced, the GLIFWC and USFS representative were not supportive of opening the use of capture devices to footholds within the MPAs at this time.

The fisher and otter zones have been simplified and now mirror the bobcat zones with a north and south zone split by Hwy 64. This is in effect for the 2018/2019 trapping season.

The woodchuck is now officially a furbearer in Wisconsin. The rule changed woodchucks from a protected species to a non-protected species with no bag limits or closed season. You will see these changes in the next trapping regulations which should be printed in July/August.

The furbearer department received a request for funding for a revision to "Wild Furbearer Management in North America" – aka the furbearer bible. As this book is incredibly useful to anyone in the furbearer world and funding of such was supported by the WDNR and the WTA, we provided the requested assistance.

The first ever Wisconsin Hunting with Hounds Workshop was held this past April for department staff and college students pursuing a degree in wildlife or natural resources. The workshop was intended to provide information about hunting with hounds while allowing wildlife professionals to interact with some of the state's most passionate hound hunters. There were 17 attendees with all but one being department staff. We are in the process of evaluating how this first workshop went and making improvements as this workshop will hopefully continue. The workshop was well received by the attendees.

This year we have held 2 University fur schools to date. Northland College held a fur school in January and Stevens Point fur school was in March. Madison is on a 2-year cycle so will return in 2019. The wildlife fur school will be held in the fall this year to change up the timing and to allow more hands-on material. The date is yet to be determined but likely September or October.

GLIFWC would like to know the dates when set.

The Youth mentored trapping bill is also new for this license year. There are two parts to this bill, one dealing with youths under 16 and one dealing with “mentored” trappers of any age. The details will be further discussed in the Wisconsin Trapper’s Association (WTA) update.

Trapper Education Update led by Curtis Twellmann – The mandated online trapper education class is now available and the first students have already gone through the program. This course is essentially the same as the correspondence course just materials are shared through email rather than snail mail. Mike Widner runs both courses. Both remote class options will require successful completion of a test-out to receive trapper education certification. We are slightly ahead of our pace last year in terms of total graduates. Many classes have been filling up. The traditional hands-on classes continue to be the most popular.

We will again be doing an Ag teacher training this year after a one-year hiatus. This training will be held at the annual Agricultural teachers conference in Appleton at the end of June.

WTA update led by Scott Zimmermann - The Fur Takers of America (FTA) 50th golden anniversary rendezvous will be held in Wisconsin this summer. The dates are June 28-30 at the Marshfield fairgrounds. Hope to see you there.

The youth mentored trapping bill has been in development for many years and was drafted perfectly when we brought it to the legislatures. Some things got reworded through the legislative process. Though it is not exactly what we wanted, it is a victory to get it on the books. From the bill language: Assembly bill 605 - *This bill authorizes a person under the age of 16 to engage in trapping without obtaining a trapping license or a trapping education certificate of accomplishment if the person is trapping under the supervision of a licensed trapper.*

Current law generally requires a person engaging in trapping to obtain a trapping license from the Department of Natural Resources. Current law also prohibits a person from obtaining a trapping license unless he or she holds a valid certificate of accomplishment indicating that he or she has successfully completed a trapper education course.

This bill creates a mentored trapping license, which authorizes the holder to engage in trapping while in contact with a qualified mentor. Under the bill, “contact” means visual or voice contact without the aid of any mechanical or electronic amplifying device other than a hearing aid. To qualify as a trapping mentor, a person must 1) be at least 18 years of age, 2) be the parent or guardian or authorized by the parent or guardian of the person being mentored, 3) be in contact with the person being mentored at all times, and 4) hold a current valid trapping license or be authorized to trap without holding a trapping license.

There is a lifetime limit on the mentored trapping license. People will only be able to purchase it twice and then must take a trapper education course and purchase a normal trapping license to continue trapping. People cannot take the permit species (fisher, otter or bobcat although bobcats can be taken

with hunting methods with a small game license and permit) with a mentor license though no one is excluded from the drawing process. Meaning someone could potentially draw an otter or fisher tag but be unable to use it. With the drawing occurring in August there will still be time for most to take a trapper education course to get certified after they are awarded a permit. Youth are not limited in the use of bobcat, fisher or otter tags according to this bill language. The bill has some issues that we may be able to resolve as we go but for now it may be a new way to get more people involved with trapping.

The DNR furbearer department has been working with Customer and Outreach Services staff to make the required changes in GOWILD. As our license system has never had to track purchases for a lifetime limit there is a significant cost associating with setting up this feature.

GLIFWC update led by Jonathan Gilbert - The recent simplification of the state fisher and otter zones required the tribes to look at their current zone structure. Though it won't match the state zones exactly, the tribes will likely use the ceded territory for their bobcat, fisher and otter zones. There will be a portion that spans over into the southern zone but it is a relatively small portion and historically the harvest in that area has not been significant. We can still record harvest by GMUs to account for where exactly the animals are coming from. This will give the tribes furbearer zones that are similar to the state zones.

Marten research for the time being has shifted to more habitat work. We have been busy looking at our forest structure including tree size, density, fallen trees etc. to try to quantify forest complexity across Wisconsin's marten range. American marten favor areas with higher forest complexity. We have been measuring the northern hardwoods north of Clam Lake but will soon do the same in Iron County. Around Clam Lake we have seen that marten and fisher spend more time in the conifer pockets within larger blocks of hardwoods. These hemlock and cedar pockets offer more forest complexity than the surrounding hardwood forests. Structurally the forests look different between Iron County and Clam Lake but we need some data to back up the anecdotal evidence.

Along with our habitat work we are also looking at prey species and how forest structure impacts their abundance and diversity. We are working with Dr. Pauli from UW Madison and a grad student to look at this relationship further.

We do most *Martes* (fisher and marten) work in the winter months but small mammal work is generally done in the summer. We are working on ways to make the data more comparable. For this committees information: there will be a *Martes* symposium in Ashland July 30 – August 2nd at Northland College this summer and everyone is welcomed to attend.

We would like to measure small mammal abundance and diversity during the winter months. The weather conditions make this difficult in Northern Wisconsin. To accomplish this, we have designed a cover contraption (18" x 30" enclosure with plywood and holes drilled into it leaving bare ground at the bottom yet allowing entry by small mammals). We have tested 8 or 10 of these to date with game cameras to monitor use. We have thousands of pictures of small mammals using these contraptions in the winter so we believe these cover contraptions will work. We know animals are using the contraptions but we must also address the cold temperatures so that we can live trap them. Bedding

helps but what we have found is bubble wrap over chemical heat warmers may be a good way to ensure that our captured small mammals can be trapped and released during the frigid winter months. This has worked well with very few mortalities in our testing. Eventually we would like to create a winter/summer small mammal comparison so that we can continue to monitor when conditions are best (summer) and use this as a predictor for winter data.

Some of the timber stands that we had previously acquired data from have been cut. We plan to look at the forest structure and how it has changed post-harvest. We also want to compare small mammal work before and after a timber harvest.

We have been unsatisfied with the GPS collars we have used over the past two years in the marten study. This technology is moving quickly and problems are to be expected early on. We are taking a break on this for now waiting for the technology to catch up. Capturing and collaring animals is expensive but we hope to continue this aspect of our research once some of the issues with the small GPS collars get ironed out.

We have posted for Nick McCann's old position and we think we have a candidate selected that should be starting in June.

Wildlife Surveys Update led by Brian Dhuey – The fur trappers survey recently went out to around 6000 licensed trappers. This survey gives us some data for the species not tracked by registrations (all furbearers except bobcat, fisher and otter). We use the deer hunter surveys as another way to track furbearer encounters but this method works to varying degrees amongst the species and may not be as useful for species with lower detectability like bobcats or for semi-aquatic species such as river otter. We send out bobcat specific surveys to bobcat tag holders as means to look at catch per unit effort and changes in perceived abundance. From the bobcat tag holder survey, we know that the tag holders trying to fill their tags have been very stable through the years at around 84%. Success rate went down a bit last season which is expected with more permits available but was still very high. Bobcats are still treated as a trophy species amongst tag holders despite the increase in quota. Trapping effort was very similar to previous years. The second period is usually dominated by hound hunting and this year with favorable weather conditions over much of the season this was even more pronounced. The hound hunters felt a little more crowded this year according to the survey with 30% indicating such in the north. Again, this is expected with more permits available but is still a minimal issue. Among trappers the feeling of crowding or competition was similar to previous years. We added a question to the bobcat survey about encounters with collared bobcats and 1.6 % in the north indicated they saw a marked cat last season. Complete results will be available in August. Only the deer hunter wildlife observations come out in April with the remainder of the furbearer surveys coming later in the summer.

Carcass Collection Update led by Nathan Roberts – This past season we collected bobcat carcasses whole and fisher jaws. From the collected bobcats we extract a tooth for aging and the reproductive tracts from females to look at the past seasons reproductive potential. We get a more realistic view of the sex composition of bobcats by sexing them in the lab since bobcats are difficult to sex in the field. Skull returns were handled by WM. Skull returns are expensive and something we would like to reduce

the desire and need for. For fisher, we just collected a jaw section this past season to prevent from having to return fisher skulls. This helped reduce the number of returns we had to deal with and compliance seemed very good. The fisher jaw collection was advertised in the trapping regulations and worked very well. For the fisher jaws submitted and the bobcat jaws we extracted at the tissue extraction event we now use a crockpot to remove the teeth from the jaws. This reduces our lab costs associated with aging the tooth cross section.

We are still deciding what we need to collect for this year. Otter collection is coming up for this season on its three-year cycle but we may not need to collect them all or any. Now that we are managing for trend and trajectory and not a numerical goal and since reproductive rates seem to remain constant in stable otter populations there may not be a need to sample otter at this time. This decision will be finalized prior to the trapping regulations going to print.

Skull returns continue to be an area of great expense and one that we would like to reduce as much as possible. We have had more complaints the past few years about skulls not being returned. When handling the carcasses and coming in and out of freezers, tags are sometimes lost which is a big deal to the harvesters and more time and expense for us. To reduce the amount of skull returns requested to just those harvesters who really want them back, last year we removed the skull return language from the tags. Harvester could still request skull returns but would need to take an extra step and securely attach a note with their address in a moisture proof bag. This seems to have reduced the number of skulls being returned for this year though we are unsure by how much. Last year we did not track the number of packages that went out as we mailed them from our mailroom. This year all skull returns have been recorded and were shipped by Spee-Dee Delivery Service.

USDA WS update led by David Ruid - Last year USDA WS took 2699 beaver and 152 incidental otter (both the highest in program history) in our Wisconsin beaver management program. Most of our trapping is done from April – October. The take for this past year is almost double our long-term averages. We service about 1800 miles of trout streams, 37 rice lakes and work with County, Township governments to protect roadways and forest resources. We have agreements with other entities to protect a variety of resources from beaver damage. About 50% of the beaver taken are on trout streams. Sawyer county had the most beaver removed with 345 beavers taken from Sawyer County. Otter are our primary non-target capture and we took 152 in 2017 and 106 in 2016. This is an increase from the long-term average also. Ratio of beaver to otter in 2017 was 17.8 which is right on par since 2003. We incidentally took more otter because we were asked to take more beaver not because our rate of incidental capture increased.

In 2017 we removed 1981 beaver dams either by hand or with the use of explosives. We had a representative at all of the beaver management plan meetings this year. Out of the beaver we took we salvaged about 1400 last year. These pelts and glands were sold to fur buyers and allow us to provide education funds (\$750) to the WTA and the Future Trappers of Wisconsin. We have annual trainings and workshops to help maintain our methodology and data reporting consistency. There are measures in place to ensure that our protocol is followed and systems to maintain data consistency. We report all non-targets as well as all target species taken.

This year is still young but it is looking like another record year.

Sharing our otter take information with the DNR is done 2 – 3 times per year. All of our trappers are given the incidental tags which are then batch submitted to the DNR. Kelly Thiel handles this aspect of our data sharing.

USDA WS can shoot beaver at night with ambient light which accounts for less than 1% of our take. We have a variance to trap on beaver dams and use bait/lure during the closed season.

LE Update led by Nate Kroeplin – We held a warden fur school at the Fur Resources Training Center in Deforest this past fall. We had three tribal wardens this year come down to take part and learn how the state handles furbearer registrations. We currently have a new warden class in the academy (13 recruits) and these folks will be stationed in December. We have approval to take on another small class this year yet which will help with our understaffing. The alignment has changed our duties quite a bit. We have over a 50% vacancy rate currently and are expected to cover all the park shifts which has been identified as our priority. May take us longer to respond to customer calls and questions until we get some more boots on the ground.

Since April 2017, all the trap incident reports come to me from LE staff and I then forward them to WM to add to the database. Incident wise it was another slow year which is good but we did record 4 significant incidents in 2017. The first involved a big bear killed in a cable restraint set which included multiple violations. We had two deer killed in cable-restraints in December. One of these was an illegal set and the other was legal but a combination of deer hair clogging the reverse-bend washer and the deer not being strong enough to self-release with the breakaway resulted in the mortality. We had one dog fatality this past season taken in a 160 body-grip trap in December. The set was legal, the dog was at large on private property.

To date in 2018 we have had 8 incidents total and 1 of these was a deer killed in a cable restraint. Most of the incidents continue to be dogs with the majority of these resulting in no injuries. For the number of trap nights Wisconsin hosts each season the number of trap incidents are incredibly low.

Beaver Research Update led by Nathan Roberts - We initiated a beaver survey project to find possible survey alternatives. Historically we did the beaver surveys by helicopters but the costs of this has skyrocketed. Finding a more cost-effective alternative is the primary goal. The beaver management plan does not specify a need to have an exact population count. We manage beaver according to trends.

The ideal time to look for beaver food caches is after the leaves fall but prior to ice up. We looked at satellite imagery for this time period but to get the high resolution needed for our purposes, this is very expensive and probably cost-prohibitive. One-meter resolution is not fine enough for us to be able to accurately identify active cache sites. Since satellite imagery is not a viable alternative at this time, we are wanting to look at catch per unit effort as a way to track changes in beaver numbers. We added a question to the fur trappers survey about what month trappers are harvesting beaver. If we find out when most beaver are being taken we can look at catch per unit effort at that time. This technique would be much cheaper but there can be an issue of memory recall. Asking in May how many traps

someone had set out on December 15th would be difficult to remember for most people. We can send them out with a log book or journal which could correct the memory issue but may result in a lower return rate. To do this we would select a random sample of licensed trappers to mail the survey and/or journal. The study period would be limited to just when we think most beaver trapping is done and would likely be a month or shorter in duration. We would need to do this for several years before we can establish any sort of trends or trajectories. Catch per unit effort to keep tabs on populations have been used in Maine, NY and other places. This fall we hope to test a catch per unit effort survey technique but we are still working on the details.

We did get out to some of the beaver survey aerial blocks and walked/kayaked around to ground truth the data. We found that we do miss some beaver activity from the air. Even with the high cost we think alternatives like catch per unit effort may not only be more cost-effective but could give us cleaner data that is more consistent through the years.

Drones are often brought up as another possible survey tool but are not in our repertoire as of now. In Indiana they used drones to survey mine sites, and were looking for wildlife applications to utilize the drones between mine jobs. They used the drone with thermal imagery to identify active muskrat huts. This same technique has also been tried with beaver and while it does work, the cost is similar to the helicopter surveys. We need to weigh the cost vs our needs. It doesn't seem like there is as much of a need for expensive survey methods for beaver presently.

People working on the Mississippi river are asking about what is being done on the Mississippi River beaver populations. The WDNR can provide consultation as to which survey methods could be the most effective but any scale beyond the trajectory of increasing, decreasing or maintaining among our beaver management zones is outside of our core work.

USDA WS specialists could keep a journal or a log book while they are beaver trapping but this is a little different than what private trappers are doing. OAS would have to think about that more as another option.

Bobcat Research Update led by Nathan Roberts – Bobcat research is ongoing in the north and has expanded to the south. We wanted to get a better idea of survivorship for our bobcat population models which we use to inform our management decisions. Our GPS collars have worked well, we do see malfunctions occasionally but no more than is expected for relatively new technology. We are happy with the collars we are currently working with. Our cooperation with private trappers has worked out well and has been cost effective. When a trapper incidentally catches a bobcat in one of our study areas, they can give the OAS a call and we will go out and collar and release the animal for them. We set up a hotline number for trappers to call when they have a bobcat captured that they do not intend to harvest. Trappers seem to enjoy the experience. The message is just getting out in the south but we hope cooperation with local trappers continues to grow. This is far more cost effective than us trying to target bobcats. So far 66 bobcats have been collared in the north to date. The northern study area includes 12 counties centered on Oneida County. This is an impressive sample size for bobcats which are

historically difficult to monitor for. If a bobcat is too small to wear one of our collars we ear tag and release it.

To date of the 66 bobcats collared over the past several years, 25 have died. One of our ear tagged animals was also harvested legally and reported. Of these 25 mortalities: 9 were taken by legal harvest, 5 were taken illegally (poached), 4 were listed as unknown mortality due to accessing the carcass when it was too decomposed to adequately determine cause of death, 2 were killed by vehicle collisions, 3 were incidental captures killed in legal cable-restraints (collar impacted this most likely), 1 bobcat died of illness (an intestinal restriction discovered in the necropsy) and 1 was a nuisance bobcat eating chickens that was taken with a damage permit. This means that 20 of the 21 known mortalities can be attributed to humans.

For our data to be indicative of the bobcat population as a whole it is imperative that collared animals are treated the same as non-collared animals. Therefore, the collar should not impact a harvester's decision on whether or not to take the animal nor should it impact the decision of the local biologist when issuing a take permit for animals causing damage. We will be advertising that take of collared animals is legal on the webpage and in the 2018 regulations that will come out this summer. We are unsure whether the collar caused the mortality in the cable-restraint deaths, these mortalities were figured in and may skew the data a bit if in fact the collar is what prevented the bobcats from being releasable in those instances.

According to our data, female survivorship is about 65%. We are most concerned with the females as they are the limiting resource when it comes to reproduction. When plugged into population models this survivorship rate is sustainable. The survivorship for female bobcats during the first couple years with lower harvest quotas was about 75% which would likely result in an increasing population. This survivorship estimate is on par with what we see across the country.

We see our cats using every type of habitat out there. Bobcats are generalist predators that are highly adaptable with large home ranges. We do see that they select for some habitat types like old forest and wet forests while some female cats were using more developed areas in the spring when they should be tending kittens. We don't see any areas that they are actively avoiding. Many home ranges are overlapping which could be an indication that we have a robust population and ample resources for these cats.

In the south we work in a 7-county area around Iowa county. In year 1, we collared 7 bobcats with 14 more getting collars in the second year. Word of mouth seems to be getting us more cooperation with trappers and we hope this continues to grow. It's still too early to glean much information about our southern cats using the collar data but we are getting there. Early on and subject to change, we have seen that mortalities from vehicle collisions may be more common in the south which makes sense with more roadways and traffic in the south. Some areas have dense populations as we had 4 cats collared on 1 forty-acre parcel. We do retain a tissue sample of all cats for genetic testing but haven't yet acted on any genetic work.

We were able to observe a probable mating event with our GPS collars when a male and female cat came together at the right time and spent a couple days together before parting ways. We should point out that the highly useful data that we are gathering with our collars wouldn't be possible without the cooperation we have received from local trappers. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

Another aspect of bobcat research that GLIFWC has been contemplating is a bobcat body condition study. This is still in the development stage. We want to look at body condition of bobcats across the great lakes region. I (John Gilbert) have old body condition data from my PhD work and my collaborator from Quebec has historical data as well. We will continue to work out the details of this possible new research this summer.

On the DNR OAS furbearer research team we are losing a couple of our key components this year. Nate Libal has left our wolf team and is now on the west coast working with large predators there. We recently lost Katie Dennison this spring to Ohio where she will be their new furbearer specialist and Nick Forman will be leaving shortly to work with furbearers and large carnivores in New Mexico. We will miss these three individuals and wish them well.

Wildlife Health Update led by Lindsey Long – Our annual wildlife health newsletter is something we have been putting together to share wildlife health updates with the public. You can access our newsletter by going to our DNR website and searching “wildlife health” and it is available there in pdf form. In addition to submitting animals for necropsy, we have both field and mortality observations entered into our comprehensive database even when carcasses aren't available. This lets us identify areas where we may have to be more proactive in watching for cases. We take reports from people who have seen wildlife acting atypically or that find suspicious clusters of dead wildlife.

We had a 38 county Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) event where the virus was a confirmed cause of mortality in wildlife from 17 counties with 21 other having probable cases. We confirmed CDV in 6 gray foxes, 1 badger, 1 coyote, 1 long-tailed weasel also some wolves, raccoons and skunks. We also had confirmed instances of parvo virus, listeriosis and blastomycosis (gray wolf) this year. We had many reports of lesions on squirrels which seemed to be dermal in nature. We got a few carcasses in and one had pox virus the others seemed to just be caused by ectoparasites.

There was some recent media attention to a cluster of Tularemia positive muskrat mortalities in brown county. Around 15 muskrats were found dead, tested and confirmed to have tularemia. This seemed to be an isolated event after the late snow storm we received. The adverse weather at a difficult time of year likely played a part in the muskrat mortalities as we don't see many tularemia mortality events in muskrats though they are a susceptible species. In cases where we find diseases that are zoonotic in nature, we work closely with the state and county health departments to disseminate information. In this instance we worked closely with state, county, and city units to provide the public with accurate information on what to do if they saw sick or dead wildlife, were in contact with muskrat or other small game in the area, and what proper personal protective equipment to wear..

Always report sick wildlife or potentially sick wildlife to local biologists. We would like to increase communication on this, maybe advertise in the regulations, trapping magazines and on social media.

Forest Service update led by Dan Eklund – We are seeing more fisher in the forests and beaver are thick. Saw more coyote hunters this past year.

Fort McCoy Furbearer Management led by Shawn Rossler – Fort McCoy is approximately 60,000 acres in Monroe county. They are beginning the process of conducting their own turkey management including issuing their own (Fort McCoy specific) turkey tags. Along with this, the Fort McCoy representatives have indicated they are interested in doing the same for bobcat, fisher and otter. Instead of trying to recruit tag winners to come in and trap they would like to be able to provide their own area specific tags to promote more trapping and hunting on the Fort. This is in the initial stages as we have yet to meet with the Fort McCoy folks yet. We haven't done this for BFO anywhere else.

The fort has its own set of regulations which limits the ability of the public to access some areas at various times. You may not have access to check traps daily. The fort would like to see more harvest but trappers may be hesitant to deal with all the access issues on the Fort when they can more easily trap other public land.

We don't yet fully know their motives or how this would look if we were to move forward. Just based on what we do know, it doesn't seem to make sense for the Fort to issue their own tags when we just simplified our zones. We could possibly help advertise that trapping is allowed on Fort McCoy to recruit more users. It may also be easier to add some time on the back end of the season to trap on Fort McCoy but that would require making them their own zone.

Once we meet with Fort McCoy representatives we will update committee members with some of the details we don't yet know.

Bobcat Sub-Committee Meeting Update led by Nathan Roberts – We formed a smaller group out of this committee to look at which indices we should put faith in and what other monitoring methods should be considered if any for bobcats. We thought about taking a smaller area in the North and adjusting the number of permits available as an experiment but our increased quota last season in effect did this already just on a larger scale. We looked at catch per unit effort with hunting and trapping, track surveys and scent post surveys. We didn't feel that our track surveys were effective for bobcats. The track surveys were too variable. We decided to put more weight on the catch per unit effort. We also want to continue to look at and put faith in the data from our collared animals. We saw some changes in the survivorship of the collared animals in the north with the increased quotas this past season. We may not see a catch per unit effort change until next year. We also wanted to look at potential new methods. We thought scent post surveys might be more useful than the traditional track surveys. last winter we used fatty acid tabs and beaver castor as attractants and used different substrates for track pads but we didn't get enough visits by bobcats in our trial to justify doing scent post surveys. Didn't get many bobcats coming in and these stations are a lot of work so probably won't continue. We believe that catch per unit effort and collar data should be weighted the highest in bobcat management decisions.

Generally, the feeling is that the bobcat sub-committee was useful. We don't think we need different sub-committees for each species but are generally in favor of making one sub-committee to evaluate data needs applying to all furbearers and ways we can improve our monitoring.

We may be moving away from some of our traditional monitoring efforts like the track survey so it is important to think about whether or not we should keep doing them if their value decreases. While the winter track survey is useful for common species it may have limited use for the species with the most sensitive management decisions like bobcats and otter. Some question if it's worth continuing the winter track survey primarily for fisher. We have also seen that there have been identification issues with the surveyors. When we compared encrypted camera footage to monitors identification the accuracy was lower than we would like. HRC representative questions whether or not the data obtained is accurate enough to consider. The GLIFWC representative mentions the history and long data set as we have been doing the winter track survey since the 70's and that he would be hesitant to stop them without a viable alternative already in place. The GLIFWC representative also shares that apart from the data obtained there is value in getting these monitors out into the field looking at tracks which should be considered as a secondary reason to continue the track surveys.

Keep in mind that the catch per unit effort that we all seem to like as an index may have difficulties too. If we get enough responses the data could prove valuable but we have seen low return rates with journal or log type surveys in the past. Return rate may make catch per unit effort difficult for some species. We will address these issues more thoroughly with a sub-committee.

Muskrat/Mink Zones led by Shawn Rossler and Ed Harvey – A packet is going around with some historic and proposed zone boundaries for muskrats and mink included. There is also some regional information on other states and their muskrat/mink zones for comparative purposes.

Historically we had a 5-zone framework for muskrat and mink but we ended up with a simplified single zone due to simplification and perceived issues with zone jumping. After the simplification, trappers in the south were catching small rats and felt the season timing was too early for them. Multiple resolutions have been written to go back to a multiple zone system due to the different weather encountered between the north and south of our state. One resolution originating in the south would set the south season opener back 2 weeks and this passed statewide. We received several resolutions from counties saying they wanted 3 zones. There is also interest in extending the back end of the season to offer more opportunity in the spring. We are getting resolutions about this each year, we want to do this right this time or someone else will step in legislatively, which we don't want. The 2017 question is still on the table but knowing we had four more coming in this year, we waited and did not address this last year. We came up with a new question based on a summation of the ones that have been submitted to return to 3 zones with three different season parameters. We are recommending that the 2018 question should be advanced as a rule change but the 2017 2 zone option is still available for discussion.

Discussion – Do the proposed opening dates accomplish the goals? Even in the north in the early season trappers are taking young rats. We don't follow prime-ness charts for any other species and I am not sure this framework accomplishes the goal which is to trap more prime rats. What is driving this?

It's not agreed upon but many northern trappers do not support the three zone and season framework due to issues with "zone jumping" but originally the season was intended to coincide with fur prime-ness and that is what some would like to see come back, especially in the south. Bryce Larson put

together some weather data showing how different it is from the south and the north. It's clear that there is quite a difference between the southern counties and the northern counties when it comes to ice up and ice out. Trappers generally stop trapping on the back end of the season when pelts start getting damaged but the opener is popular no matter what condition the muskrats are in.

Muskrats are primarily trapped on public lands so there are more issues with zone jumping than for other species. If this should be considered or not is another debate all together. Our trapping licenses are state licenses so for species other than bobcat, fisher and otter the license is good statewide.

Only 2 trappers that I (Jenna Kosnicki) know in the North even knew about this proposed split and they were both against it. The willingness of a northern trapper to zone jump is less than the southern trappers. Lodging and land is easier to find in the north making it easier to go there than vice-versa. I don't think this was properly advertised in the North part of the state prior to the spring hearings.

Right now, we essentially have one zone with Northern season timing. The central portion of the state is really the muskrat "factory". When fur prices are high, the prime-ness doesn't matter much but it does now and so this is receiving a lot of attention.

We will revisit this issue tomorrow. Meeting in recess until tomorrow morning at 7:45 AM.

Meeting adjourned at 5:21 PM

May 24, 2018: Day 2 - Committee Recommendations

Meeting initiated at 8:02 by Shawn Rossler with agenda corrections and logistics.

Harvest summaries and population data packets are distributed to participants.

Bobcat information will go to the board in September, reminder that the numbers we talk about here are preliminary and subject to change. All decisions on quotas and permit issuance will be recommendations until they are accepted.

Fisher discussion led by Nathan Roberts – Our harvest summary combines state and tribal harvest. We share information with the tribes, they give us their numbers and we combine them into these species packets that were passed out. We took 604 fisher this past year. We came in under quota again this year. We have been using the highest success rates over the past 3 years to allocate permits which is conservative. If we use the average success rate instead we would likely achieve a harvest that more closely resembles our quotas. The state harvest is up 15%, the tribal harvest has decreased bit. The tribal harvest is likely down because a couple of the primary harvesters did not trap last season.

Success rates over time have stayed fairly consistent. Zone A has bounced around a bit more than the other zones. The zones are now consolidated as a reminder with the same north and south zone boundaries as bobcats. We record harvests by game management unit so we will still know where harvests are coming from but we won't know effort at any scale less than the new 2 zones.

Committee looks through the data from winter track counts, deer hunter survey and age distribution which is steady.

There may be a trend of more juveniles in zones E and F, with the adult ratio declining in harvest. More juveniles taken may indicate population growth in this area.

In Zone A the population trend according to our model has been stable the past several years. We had a quota of 150 last year which appears to be sustainable. For Zone B the population appears to be growing. The goal was 75 last year but a quota of 100 is sustainable. For Zone C we had a harvest goal of 60 and we took 58, a similar harvest goal would be sustainable. Zone D is also stable. The goal was 100 and that same quota would be sustainable. We aren't setting the quotas zone by zone this year. As a reminder, the northern 4 zones are now the one larger northern zone. The success rates across all 4 has gone down some since 2000-2001. Our 3-year average success rate is 17% and the maximum is 23%.

We have bounced back and forth between using average success rates and maximum success rates to allocate permits in the past. We want to avoid creeping up on the quotas so the maximum success rate has given us more leeway but if that is less of a worry now we could use the average so that more permits are available.

We see the populations high in the 90s and this has flattened out overtime. Seems to be settling in at this level. The population goal of 2 fishers per square mile is in code. The 6000 figure on this graph appears lower than that goal. We may want to change the goal because the flat trend line looks good. The success rate between max and average is not as big of an issue with us now.

About 9000 fishers would be our goal according to the 2 per square mile. We are 2/3 of that. I think it makes sense to do away with numerical goals and manage according to trends as this method is more defensible and we don't get hung up on possibly arbitrary numbers.

We don't know how harvest will redistribute itself when these zones are consolidated this year. The OAS suggests we maintain a similar quota this year as last. See how the harvest redistributes itself with these consolidations and move forward from there.

In allocating permits we can use either the average or maximum success rates to allocate. There is about a 500-permit difference if we use the maximum vs. the average success rates.

The HRC representative thinks we should stay with the maximum success rates. With bears in Zone B we have been going back and forth and there has been quite a few complaints about that inconsistency.

We may see higher success rates this year with the zone consolidation if more people travel to the best areas to trap (according to the NOD representative). If we look at the recent history, we have consistently been under quota which might make using the average success rate more appropriate.

What are the impressions of the status of fishers in the north from the northern committee members? We are seeing an uptick in fishers. We have caught fisher pictures on our trail cams around 90% of the time. All northern committee members feel that the fisher population is on the rise.

The zone consolidation may increase harvest in the prime areas but due to the transient nature of fishers this shouldn't be an issue. We are still monitoring trends just at a larger scale like we do for bobcats. Some people in A and B will have a bunch of points and may "hoard" a good portion of the permits this year. Once the harvesters in the top zones draw a tag and reset their points to zero, the harvest should redistribute.

Our north quota has been at 385, there looks to be an opportunity to increase to 400. We could also leave the quota at 385 and bolster harvest by allocating more permits using the average success rates in our calculation.

The committee agrees leaving the quota at 385 and bolstering success rates by using the average success rates to allocate permits is preferred.

Committee Recommendation: Quota of 385 fishers for the North Zone and use the average success rate over the past 3 years to allocate permits.

The new southern zone includes old zones E and F. We don't have population objectives in the south. The success rate was around 20% in old zone E this past year. In zone F our success rate was around 16%. If we combine the 2, the success rate is about 17%.

The GLIFWC representative is a bit concerned with all these permits available in the south that everyone will concentrate around the central forests. This is different than in the North where the fisher population is relatively stable and uniform. It is difficult to predict these things so proceed with caution.

The success rate is pretty similar between the new north and the south zones. Most trappers trap locally due to the daily trap checks and there isn't as much public land in the central forest as there is in other areas. The WTA feels that this won't be much of an issue with the number of fishers people are seeing in agricultural lands.

There has been a quota of 600 for the south. There is less than 1% difference between the average success rates and the maximum success rates for what is now the south zone.

Committee discussion. From the southern zone representatives, it seems everyone is seeing fisher sign but not at the density encountered in the north.

Do we need a quota in the south? If most everyone is getting a permit anyway, why not use a bag limit and see how that goes?

We probably need to be consistent across zones so that people don't double dip.

Committee agrees using the average success rate to allocate permits and keeping with the 600 quota is preferred.

Committee Recommendation: Quota of 600 fishers for the South Zone and use the average success rate over the past 3 years to allocate permits.

River otter discussion led by Nathan Roberts – The numbers used for the state harvest summary are preliminary and subject to change. The season ended a few weeks ago so these registrations are still coming in. We won't know where we stand until all the physical registrations are accounted for. Generally, we see around 90% compliance with the furbearer registrations so we don't expect the numbers to change much. We have yet to receive the APHIS numbers so our incidental mortalities are low.

Our statewide harvest goal was 2000 last season but even with new registrations coming in, we will be well below that number. Primarily otters are caught when beaver trapping. We would like to shift incidentals into the harvest column. Last season we allocated permits equitably across all zones and since the number of applicants was less than the number of permits available, everyone received a tag that applied with a few folks getting two tags. We increased the quota but the harvest didn't increase much.

We gathered information from across the country and 40 states now allow harvest of river otter. No state is reporting declines in river otter. Nor is any Canadian provinces or Mexican state reporting declines. Otter seem to be doing well across North America even with regulated harvest over much of their range.

Success rates have been declining in Wisconsin which usually goes along with the increase in quota and permit levels. This is also likely tied to beaver prices and the availability of tags. Harvester effort decreases as tag availability increases. One might be less inclined to make an effort to harvest an otter when they feel they will get a tag every year. Since most of our otter are probably taken while beaver trapping, beaver prices probably play a big part in our otter harvest whether its legal harvest or incidentals. Otter pelt prices are also too low for many to target them. Otter don't have the "novel trophy" status either which drives effort on species like bobcats.

Another factor that plays into the lower success rates is in the permit drawing process. Anyone can get in the drawing for an otter (also bobcat and fisher though bobcats can be hunted) regardless of whether or not they are trapper education certified. This means some tags go to people who can't use them until they take a trapper education course. We have seen that months into the season people are looking for trapper education courses after all the classes have ended to use a tag they drew in August.

This past year we completed more otter flights in the north. Our numbers were good in the north but in the south due to a smaller sample size the confidence intervals overlap 0 in many cases.

The winter track count is not designed to pick up otter so has little value. The age distribution looks good for a stable population. There is no harvest bias in river otter like we see in bobcats.

We don't have all the harvest data yet and so the population model hasn't been run.

The quota has gone up quite a bit since 2009 as have permits available. Everyone got a tag last year. This may be a good species to try out a bag limit. We appear to be at a population that could sustain a year of unusually high harvest. Even using a bag limit system, we could leave the quota in place so that the

season could be shut down should harvest reach the quota early. We would still have the phone/online registration system to keep tabs on harvest.

Closing the otter season early may be more difficult than for other species.

We don't have to have a quota. If there is no concern of over harvest than we wouldn't need a quota.

Closing the season early will just make more incidentals and less harvested animals. Your just moving otter from one mortality category to another.

Our state beaver harvest ranges from between 20,000-30,000 annually. If we assume the APHIS ratio of about 1 otter for every 20 beaver applies to fur trappers also, there should be 1000 incidental otter each year. Only about 200 get turned in and end up in our freezers. A bag limit even at 1 should capture some of these incidentals.

If we do want to explore the bag limit option, this change wouldn't take place this year. If we start now, this would likely be 2-3 years out.

If in the future if otter fur prices increase we would need a quota built into this bag limit if we go this way. It would be too late to try and do it after we see an increase in harvest.

As far as what we are required to do for a CITES species: nothing requires in person registration for CITES species. We just need to have rules, regulations and a way to enforce. In some states you can just call and they will mail you a CITES tag. Not suggesting we do that but there is leeway in the Federal regulations.

We are running about 90% compliance with the online/phone otter registrations.

The tribes won't go to a 1 otter bag limit. They will want a group quota. We need to know how to deal with that if it becomes an issue. It's not an issue right now at 1% of the overall harvest but in the future, it could increase.

Prices are difficult to predict and we usually don't know until the auctions. It's generally the year after an increase in price when you see the big increase in effort.

Do we want to begin the process of converting to a bag limit for otter with the quota as a backup? We wouldn't set a bag limit in code so there would be some flexibility.

There is an aquatic furbearer research question on the spring hearings adding 3\$ to the application fee. A bag limit would stop that by eliminating applications.

We could add the fee to the trapping license if the otter applications were no longer an option.

The OAS doesn't see a concern for otter. We have tons of water, good habitat, lower interest and have seen increases in otter so with no concern I think a bag limit makes a lot of sense for otter. They are dying anyway incidentally in beaver traps. I am in favor of a bag limit.

If we take more otter, wont the price go down with higher demand?

The us takes around 40 – 60 k otter a year, the 1500 from Wisconsin has minor impact on the overall market.

12 states have emergency rule provisions for river otter, 13 states evaluate quotas each year. Other states do it as needed. We have the emergency rule provision in place already.

River otter have been a conservation success story.

The NOD representatives have some concerns with the bag limit.

I just don't see the urgency, we have something that's working now, why change it?

The emergency rule closure if needed would hurt the northern folks more than anyone.

We covered this 5 years ago. The last time the big issue was predictability for the trappers. Going back and forth and possible closures seem to be counter to this.

The otters are dying incidentally anyway they just aren't all being reported. We could essentially create a 1 otter bag limit by giving every applicant a tag. The next year we could try giving every applicant two tags to try and capture a higher percent of the incidentals in legal harvest.

It seems we all think that we can move towards the bag limit system but timing isn't agreed upon. There may be a way to get this started and then shut it down before it comes to fruition. If we start now submitting proposals by August, then go through the spring hearings and the earliest we could see a change would be the 2019-2020 season. Generally, it's a 2-year process so likely the 2020-2021 season.

We can start the process but continue with the experiment the OAS mentioned. This would give us some time to figure out all the details.

I like recording all this, I would rather see it down on a document we can all read.

We can ignore the timeline for now and get all this written out in a document so its recorded and go from there. We will hold off on a proposal and continue with the permit system for now.

In the interim we can explore different bag limits using our permits.

I am interested to see what a 2-otter bag limit would do to our success rates.

We could effectively make a 2-otter limit by permit just in half of the state if we wanted to try it on a smaller scale.

I don't think this accomplishes the goal because it doesn't account for people that apply for a preference point only. Can we get rid of preference points?

For this season we are going to stick with the status quo.

We can allocate tags similar to last year, We can use the 2000 quota and allocate permits using the 3 year average. This would increase permits since we used a 20% success rate to figure permit levels last year.

This would be a 26% increase in permits this year. I wonder if we could do a survey for successful trappers to see if the otter were incidental or targeted in a separate survey to just successful otter trappers. I think that would be useful information.

We may be able to add that to the GOWILD registration.

In conclusion we will Put together a document capturing the bag limit discussion and share amongst the committee. We will have a bag limit of 2000 again and use the 3-year average instead of the 20% we used last year which will increase permits available and we will issue permits equitably the same as last year.

Committee Recommendation: Quota of 2000 otters statewide and use the three-year average success rate to allocate permits equitably throughout the state.

Bobcat discussion north zone led by Nathan Roberts - Harvest summary packet is passed out. We had 529 in the state harvest, the tribal harvest this year was 19. We base the sex ratios on the carcasses obtained at tissue extraction since bobcats are difficult to sex in the field. Our harvest is predominantly males. Our harvest has increased to the point that we need to ask how much data do we need. We may not need to collect every bobcat harvested? Page 2 is a visual representation of where the harvests are coming from. We don't see much take down in the Southeast but I think that has to do with effort and not a lack of animals. I feel that the south is more productive so we could see a shift in the future of more animals being taken in the south. Success rates are on page 4. Harvest methods statewide is shifting more to the hound hunters and away from trapping but this is weather dependent. Sex composition is skewed and highly selective as hound hunters are taking mostly big cats which are often male. The trapping harvest is more indicative of our population with less selectivity. If we want to learn from the carcasses maybe we should target the trapped animals in our carcass collection. Age composition again is skewed due to the selectivity especially from the hound hunters. Pregnancy rates are higher the last couple years more so to do with observer differences than actual changes. We changed the way we look at this a couple years ago to align with how other states do it for comparable data.

We used the 5-year average trendline to smooth out some of the peaks and valleys. The line is more important than the year to year change. We completed more routes for the track survey but still not a vast number of encounters so the intervals are wide. In the deer hunter survey, the observations are really low and so not as useful.

In some of those years when you see changes there were some changes in survey methodology. We promoted the surveys more in some of the year's corresponding to the peaks.

The hunter trapper survey numbers are staying consistent. This is on the bobcat survey. Number of bobcats run per day with dogs looks like a slight increase in the North over the past few years. Bobcat harvest per 1000 trap nights is a measure of CPU effort which shows an increase over the past 3 years.

Population estimates by our models seem to be slightly increasing. The number of bobcats from our model are not as important as the trends.

In the north we had a 550 quota this past season and we took 399 cats. We increased the quota significantly so expected to be lower than usual success rates. If we want to maintain population than a similar goal to last year is suggested 500-600. I like the idea of staying the course and keeping the quota where it was last year. We saw survivorship decline with our collar data but we wouldn't expect the catch per unit effort to change significantly until next year. Next year we will have a better idea of how these higher quotas are panning out.

Last year we used the maximum success rate to allocate permits but this year in the bobcat subcommittee meeting we talked about using the three-year average to increase the permits allocated to try and get closer to quota.

There were 830 permits issued last year but we would have about 1,063 permits available this season if we use the average success rates in the North.

Everyone supports a continued quota of 550 and allocating permits using the 3-year average, increasing permits available.

Committee Recommendation: Quota of 550 bobcats in the North Zone and using the three-year average success rate to allocate permits.

We do have some conservative measures already plugged into our models. The survivorship plugged into the model is lower than what we are seeing in our collar research. We don't want to change that until we have a bit more data. With this I feel comfortable that this quota is still conservative. We use .56 in the model for adult survivorship but what we have seen is .65. Juvenile survivorship is still an unknown.

Bobcat discussion south zone led by Nathan Roberts - We don't use population models in the south. There is no numerical population objective in the south zone. We have been operating by slowly increasing the quota and monitoring the trends for red flags. We have seen a slow decrease in success rates with the increase in permits. This is expected. We harvested 148 bobcats out of the 200 quota this past season. The permits were allocated based on maximum success rates last season. The second season sees higher success rates than the first. We have less information for the southern part of the state. We are starting to get a bigger sample size of collar data in the south and we hope this continues to grow.

We would be closer to harvesting the quota if we use the average success rate rather than the maximum. Once we get more data from our southern cats we can fill in some of these data gaps.

The OAS would suggest if we increase the quota, we do what we have been doing and go up to 250. If we remain at 200 the OAS would suggest using average success rates to increase the number of tags.

In the Southwest predator project, we got 16 bobcats collared last year, 6 caught by us and 10 from trappers. We will have better data on our southern bobcats next year once we get sufficient data on these animals. We would like to keep increasing this sample size, cooperation with local trappers is the best way to do this.

The three-year average would be the total average for the entire season not broken down by 1st time-period and second time-period. The quota was split last year between the periods but the success rates were used for each time-period.

May be a good thing to revisit our numerical goal when it comes to bobcat and fisher like what we did with otter. A numerical goal is difficult to manage for. We are above where our management goal is but I don't think there is a need to drive bobcat numbers down. Getting rid of our numerical goal offers us more flexibility. Managing by trends is more defensible than by managing towards a specific number.

We have about 15,000 people applying for bobcat tags in Wisconsin.

Committee agrees we should consider managing for trends and not a numerical goal for fisher and bobcat and use trends across the board.

A quota of 250 for the south using average success rates is supported.

Committee Recommendation: Quota of 250 bobcats for the South Zone and use the average success rates to allocate permits.

Marten protection areas (continued) led by Shawn Rossler – We need to talk more about possibly allowing the use of footholds within the MPAs. What pan tension or other modifications would be adequate to keep marten from being incidentally caught?

John Erb from Minnesota DNR gave us some background information, average size of marten in MN were about 2.5 pounds and they only had one incidental marten capture that he knew about (released successfully).

We talked about 4 pounds, 8 pounds and at any mandated poundage, how do we enforce it?

There are commercially available trap pan tension testers that go up to 4 pounds marked in one-pound increments. There also may be one that goes up to 8 pounds available. Pan tension can be set using under-alls, adjusting the pan tension bolt and others.

Currently in the MPAs now we can use wet sets, we can use boxes, and cable restraints. The incidentals in MN may not be indicative of what could happen here. The incidental that John Erb talks about is the only one he knows about but they have a bag limit. How many are caught and just retained? GLIFWC representative wouldn't support the use of any footholds in MPAs as footholds with restrictions seem too risky and difficult to enforce, but would be in favor of the weasel boxes.

The APHIS program with around 100,000 trap nights have never taken an incidental marten when wolf trapping. The APHIS representative shares that the under-pan springs are the most consistent pan tension devices available. The GLIFWC representative brings up that the footholds in the MPA's wouldn't be restricted to wolf traps. Smaller sized traps may be more difficult to achieve the desired pan tension.

John Erb also shared that the number 1 predator of martens is bobcats, coyotes were number 2. So being able to target these animals with more tools (cable-restraints are currently allowed) may ease some predations on marten. These MPAs could create a refuge for higher bobcat and coyote numbers.

The MPAs are a small percentage of the total trapping areas and American martens are our one state endangered mammal. Some committee members are unsure if this risk would be worth it to impact just a few harvesters. Some individuals would like to be able to trap wolves if they get delisted around the elk herds. Those elk come with a great cost and being able to trap wolves in the elk range should wolves be delisted would be of value.

The USFS gets a lot of funding to defend marten, being a state endangered animal in such a small box, the USFS representative agrees with the GLIFWC representative that while weasel boxes are of no concern, footholds should not be allowed in the MPAs. The USFS may need to have an internal meeting about this proposal. We have had marten trap mortalities, mostly in body grip traps outside the MPAs. The boundaries aren't all encompassing.

This proposal is most likely going to move forward. The details of the proposal haven't yet been filed in but we will take all the concerns from this meeting and share this with the group. If we were to allow footholds within the MPAs, can we agree on a pan tension? If compliance with laws is the biggest concern, why are we assuming that people are following the restrictions that are currently in place in the MPAs? If we could come up with a reliable way to protect marten sized animals that is enforceable most of the committee would be in favor of moving forward.

From an LE perspective this would be very difficult to enforce. We can't just snap a bunch of traps. Pan tension alone is tough to enforce but other things like offset jaws or certain sizes would be easier to enforce. If we included other parameters in the language that are more easily enforced, it would be helpful for LE.

The USFS and GLIFWC representative do not support the use of footholds in the MPAs. Other committee members are hesitant to offer support but with adequate and enforceable protection measures would support the increase in opportunity.

2018 Spring hearing results led by Shawn Rossler - Question 12 modified closed areas on wildlife refuges to allow more trapping opportunity. This passed and received approval at the statewide CC meeting. This looks to be a benefit for trappers and I don't see any concerns.

Question 13 was to allow lure and bait outside of the usual trapping season. Landowners and APHIS can but their agents cannot. This would make it easier for nuisance trappers to get in and take the target

animal quicker. This will go through the normal rules process which means it would be two years from implementation. This measure passed overwhelmingly.

Next question also dealt with nuisance trapping. This would allow trapping within 15 feet of a beaver dam on private land. Landowners are able currently but this would open this up to everyone. This also passed overwhelmingly. You would need permission on MFL land since its privately owned. LE and WM will work together to draft up what the permission letter should look like. It can be simple.

Do you need written landowner permission to trap on the dam or just to trap in general? It should just say that on private land you can trap on the dam. Outside the season they will already need written permission to be there. I just don't know if we need the written authorization specifically for the trapping on the dam. Township roads are a bit of an exception. Verbal permission during the season and written permission outside the season would be required. The 15- foot restriction may increase incidental captures with everyone just trapping in the channel. Occasionally the dam and lodge are connected which gets confusing since you can trap the lodge but not on the dam currently.

LE would be more worried about domestic incidentals. Some dams are good crossing points and good canine trapping locations. This could increase domestic pet captures in some areas. APHIS has 10s of thousands of trap nights on the beaver dams and we haven't had any issues. There are many things you could put in the language to limit the possibilities, date constraints, wet sets constraints, trap type constraints to prevent domestic captures if that is a concern.

The committee is in favor of moving forward and allowing trappers to trap on the dam. The committee suggested a slight change in the original proposal. The amended proposal would allow trapping within 15ft of any beaver dam on both public and private land in beaver zones A and B (north of highway 64) while limiting trapping on the dam to only private land in the south (due to potential conflict on heavily used public lands in southern Wisconsin).

Question 15 was to allow incidental raccoons to be kept after the raccoon season. Passed in all 72 counties. Committee supports this with no concerns.

Mink/muskrat zones led by Ed Harvey – Back to the three-zone system with the different start and end dates for muskrats and mink. We talked about this yesterday. Around twice as many people were in favor of this as against it. We had four resolutions come in last year. We combined these into something that we think works. The resolution boundaries changed between 2017 and 2018 because the original zone boundaries had some issues like splitting counties.

The driving force here is not only prime-ness but also has to do with ice and open water trapping. The southern trappers are wearing sun screen while people in the north are frozen shut on the same date. It may be difficult to have a season well suited for the entire state with such differences in ice formation from north to south. The resolutions also called for more opportunity in the spring on the tail end of the season. Most complaints currently are with the opener.

If seasons are set for the entire state with a single zone, we should focus on the central-portion that is effectively our muskrat factory. If we did this with a statewide season the northern trappers would be froze out every year.

If going back to the three zones (with the Miss River 4 zones), the hybrid boundaries make the most sense. Using the Hwy 64 and 60 as straight across zone boundaries is the easiest to understand. The committee mostly agrees to support this with the NOD representatives in opposition.

If the central and north zones had the same opener, it would reduce zone-jumping but might not suit what the trappers in each zone want in terms of season dates. It is important to remember that mink are more plentiful than muskrats in some areas and they may be less able to deal with a prolonged harvest season than muskrats. The WTA supported this resolution as it was written. At the fur harvesters committee everyone was on board with this and all areas of the state were represented. The committee recommends moving forward with a rule proposal, but will note the concerns that have been expressed by northern representatives.

County resolutions led by Ed Harvey – These were referred to the fur harvest committee. We will meet in August and either advance or kill these resolutions.

Committee reads through the list of county resolutions and voice concerns. Much of the committee was opposed to the 4-day check on body-grip traps. There is too much chance for an incident with such liberal check laws.

Several committee members opposed the baiting for coyote hunting resolution. Anything that adds more litter to the landscape is a bad idea especially on public land. Cleaning up of bait piles would likely be an issue and one that the general public may not respond well to on public lands. Any baiting or congregation of multiple animals into one small area is associated with a heightened risk of disease transmission.

Meeting chairman asks for public input and there is none. Meeting chairman asks for other concerns from the committee:

From the HRC – Too many of our deer are consumed by coyotes. This issue keeps getting worse and worse. There is a big problem here and it needs to be addressed. Discussion - Coyotes are very prolific. As long as some people don't allow hunting and trapping, we can't do anything to control this. They already have a yearlong open season with no bag limit.

The possibility of snare extensions for beaver trapping is brought up. Currently there is a 5-foot restriction on snare length. A trapper from the south is requesting a length extension for beaver snares. Checked with Chuck Pils (former WI DNR furbearer specialist) and this came from a recommendation from a western trapper who came in and demoed the use of beaver snares originally. Some committee members would oppose this due to increased chance of issues arising. You can already put the snare on a "submersion cable" that would not be included in the snare length restriction. No support is offered from the committee.

Extending the amount of time that people have, to meet with a warden to register furbearers is brought up. Prior to online registration this was more urgent. There may be more issues with freezer burn which could be in issue for LE and also decomposition which might make tissue extraction more difficult. Harvesters if they happen to take the animal near the end of the month have a tough time meeting with a warden in the time allotted. LE and OAS doesn't see any issues with allowing more freedom in the physical registration of furbearers. Other committee members don't see enough of an issue to warrant more change at this time. This year the amount of time went up to 7 days from 5 which will ensure that everyone has a full week to meet with a warden. This should resolve most of the problems. This issue will be tabled until we see if the increase to 7 days reduces the conflicts.

An exemption to the sight exposed bait rule for enclosed trigger traps and body-grip traps is brought up. These trap types don't catch raptors so we may not need the sight exposed bait law for trap types other than footholds. Committee members don't see any issues with removing the sight-exposed bait law for dog proofs but do not feel the same way about body-grip traps at this time. We will move forward on the dog proofs but leave body-grip traps out for now.

Allowing the use of cable restraints before DEC 1st on private land with permission is brought up. This has been brought up before. According to the BMP testing, cable-restraints are some of the best capture devices available for canids. The original reason for the starting date were incidental raccoons. The trap design is not well suited for raccoons and could result in more issues. The start date is legislative and in statute so there is nothing we can do about it at this time despite support from several committee members.

An increase in the maximum jaw spread to 9" for wet sets is brought up. This deals with a specific trap type, the TS 85. Committee members have concerns over this size trap and incidental captures. The committee doesn't support this as written.

Hunting fisher with hounds was brought up. The WTA does not support this as fisher were brought back to Wisconsin by trappers and for trappers. We have some concern with fisher numbers in their core range and this may not be a good time to experiment with new harvest methods. The committee does not support this.

The proposed badger season is brought up. We have a recent study showing that we have a robust badger population that could sustain a harvest. The nuisance issues that arise with badger could likely be mitigated by a harvest season. This issue was put forward as a rule proposal and ended somewhere along the way. We can try to send this along the line again.

Everyone likes Kemp Station as a venue.

Meeting adjourned at 3:02 PM

